THE MODERNISTS

ROBERT NORWOOD

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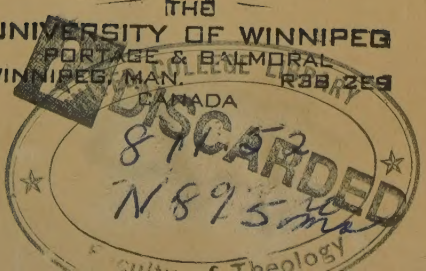

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THE MODERNISTS

BY

ROBERT NORWOOD

Author of "The Piper and the Reed," "The Witch of Endor," "His Lady of the Sonnets," etc.

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O Light of all the world! Strange cosmic glow
That lit the mind of Buddha brooding long;
Burned in the bush of Horeb; touched the strong,
Pure heart of Homer and, with sudden flow,
Spilled splendour on the prophets in the throe
Of great words uttered at the ancient wrong,
Moved unto thunder-cadences of song,
Ages ere Christ was crowned the King of woe.

Man on the scarlet peak of morning stands
With face uplifted to the mounting gleam
That draws him ever onward to one goal;
Thou art the impulse of his eager hands,
The inspiration of his eyes that dream,
The infinite constraining of his soul.

THE CAVE MAN

THE CAVE MAN

In what rude age remote from one of gold
Found man the wide significance of fire?
Then only did the guttural tones aspire
To speak that Word which from the days of old
Till now hath all our finite yearnings told.
He stands to bridge the gulf 'twixt drum and lyre,
Caves and the domes of Babylon and Tyre,
Who first saw in the flame God's garment-fold.

Is not he Christ, who leaps a thousand years—
Gains for his comrades one more steep ascent
Upon the path of progress? Therefore, hail
To all earth's glad, undaunted pioneers!
Tortured and slain for Truth, theirs the content
Of knowing that through them she must prevail.

Eater of flesh,
Eater of wood,
Lapper of water!
Here is more wood;
Here is more flesh;
Here is more water:
I bow and kneel.

Harken, O Eater!
O Lapper of water!
O Thou that shinest
Far in the night,
High on the hills,
Over the plains:
Harken, O Eater!
O Lapper of water!
Something hurts here
Where there is beating
Under my breast,
When I look up;
When I look out;
When I look down:
Something hurts here,
Back of these eyes—
Fills them with water
That wets my face,
When I see Thee.

Why dost Thou sting me!
Wilt Thou have more flesh?
Here is a young lamb
Torn from its mother—
List to its bleating!
See how the sharp stone
Cuts the throat open!
Ha! how the red blood
Foams for Thee, Eater.

I only know Thee;
I and one other:
She of the long hair
And the white body—
She with the small one
Back in the cave,
Where the great Roarer
Can not come near us.

Well I remember
How I did find Thee:
One day was noise
With falling of water
Out of the sky;
She was afraid,
Crept back in the cave,
Holding the small one;
Safe from the Shaker,
The Cleaver of clouds,
I stood and watched Thee
Leap through the darkness.

Suddenly something
Smote me to blindness,
Hurled me to silence
Down on the rock!
When my eyes opened,
There was a Presence
Eating the small twigs
Blown by the wind
Into the cave.
I trembled a moment,
Wondered and watched.
Thou wast a flower
Sprung up from the floor,
Thy roots in the twigs
And out of them drew
Brightness and beauty.
I heard Thee make sound
Of the leaves in their laughter,
When the wild wind
Goes frolicking with them;
Of the streams in the night,
When the white cold
Covers them over.
I knew Thou wast calling:
"Something to eat!",
Even as I call:
"Something to eat!",
When I am come
Home from the hunting;
So I brought branches

Out of the wet
And gave them to Thee.
How great Thou didst grow—
Swollen from eating,
Sudden and noisy,
Roaring and mighty—
How great Thou didst grow!
Thus Thou art with me,
And they are afraid—
All the night-eyes
That float through the dark—
They are afraid
And cry when they see Thee
Here in my cave.

Tell me, O Eater!
Why we are different
From Big Face
And Long Arm
Down in the wood,
Hating our cave:
Theirs not the sharp stone,
Neither the thrower,
Nor do they know Thee.
They do not make words
That sound like the call
Of a bird on the bough;
Of a tree to the wind;
Of the water to earth,
When it falls from the hill:

Words that she makes,
Holding the small one
Close to her breast.
Tell me, O Eater,
Why her white body,
Eyes and the red mouth,
Make me feel something
Where there is beating
Under my breast!
Why am I white,
Short-armed and tall?
Why am I broad
Over the eyes?
Why do we live
Here in the cave;
Why do they live
Low in the wood?
Tell me, O Changer!
Why Thou art never—
Never the same.

. . . . . .

Thou art the Bubble
Blown from the lip
Of her who is Night!
Thou art the blossoms
Caught in the hair
Of her who is Night!
Thou art the Far One—
He who gets up
Out of his bed,

Covered with colours;
Rises and stands
Naked and strong,
Brave on the hills,
Leapeth to win
Swiftly the top
Of that which is sky!
Thou art Big Tooth!
Thou art the Roarer
Made like a mountain,
Whose legs are as trees,
Whose footsteps are thunder—
The sound of Thy voice,
When there is noise
With falling of water
Out of the sky!
Thou art all that hath wings!
Thou art all that I see
In her who is mine,
Holding the small one
Close to her breast!

AKHENATON

AKHENATON

First on the written page of Time, he stands
Forth from the phantoms of the reedy Nile
That haunt the tombs of Pharaohs. For a while
He dreamed, then woke and with inspired hands
Made him a city. Not with proud demands
Called he those pylons up, but with a smile,
As of a brother, helped the builders pile
Stone upon stone above the yellow sands.

True comrade of all ages and a Christ
Of those far centuries, he taught his day
What now the too-long silent years proclaim.
To him the title—*First Evangelist,*
Who in confusion of the tongues could say:
There is one God—Eternal Love His name!

Come, Nefertiti! Let us leave the shawms
And throbbing tabours for the curtained night
Whose canopy is stretched beyond the Nile
Down to the desert. What do we with sound,
Who know that silence is melodious?

. . . . . .

Behold these fragments of the disk of day,
Shattered by Aton and spread over space:
The seed of which He reaps to-morrow's sun!
What growth is here! What certainty of life!
Under the gold and glory of the stars,
Lean on me, Love! tell me that thou art glad
Of this our city.

Thebes; the priests of Amon;
Intrigues of temples whose dumb idols are
Vain shadowings of the Ineffable;
Forever stand behind us: we are free!
Think, Nefertiti! We are free to find
God in the lotus, in the shrub and vine.
He is no more the shadow of a hand
Held high and threatening above the earth;
He is no more propitiated Fear
Purchased by blood from punishment for sin:
He is the love that made me wait for thee,
Till Ay and Ty, the foster-parents, said—
Dushratta's daughter is of age and longs
To know the touch of Akhenaton's lips.

Three feathers now are fallen from the wing
Of that eternal, soaring seraph, Time;
Three years in which our city grew a place
Of palaces. The barge that brought us down
From Thebes has rested at the pier one hour.
Is it not well that we should be alone
And far from any pretence of loud pipes,
Who know that music is the soul of form?
What forms are these! Mark well yon granite boles—
A grove of palms is there—shaped by the skill
Of Bek and Auta who transfigure rock
To ordered aisles of tapered monoliths.
Bek is a mighty builder. He has made
This palace of the pillared porticoes,
Fronting the disk of Aton where it blooms
Like one great scarlet poppy of the east,
Or folds its petals slowly to the night.
I dreamed this lovely garden that he grew—
Obedient and eager on my word—
This garden into which we now descend
To wander mid the fountains and the flowers.

. . . . . .

Shall we disturb the bulbul on the bough
And bid him sing? or are these thin cascades
That pour from pool to pool past marble brims
A sweeter song? Pause here and let me pluck
This lotus, like a moon within the fountain;
Upon each flattened petal there are pearls—
I shake them on Queen Nefertiti's hair!
The poppies are empurpled by the night;

How they will laugh with scarlet lips at dawn:
Sweet poppies, ye are Nefertiti's lips
Pressed close to mine—as now! . . .

Wilt thou sit, Love?
Here is a little throne of marble shaped
By Auta for his queen. What cunning work
Of chisel on the stone! How every line
And whorl is emulous of patterned stars
Laid out by Aton for the sculptor's craft!
New art is in the work of Auta's hand.
He will transform the lifeless, flat profile
Of Egypt's ancient, dreamless sculpturing
To love and laughter imaged on the wall,
Or pedestalled beneath our porticoes.
The little throne, my Love, is incomplete:
Our daughter Merytaton is to stand
Forever virgin, wrought of porphyry;
Her body the right pillar and one arm
Touching the back shaped like a lotus leaf.
At left is Meketaton, while the babe
Anksenpaaton is above thy head,
Held by the lotus . . .

At thy feet comes rest.
Remove my crown. Make me forget the King.
I would lose sight of Pharaoh in the man—
The man who loves a woman on her throne!
O Nefertiti! there is deathlessness
Within our love. This night I know that we

Fared forth together, hand in hand, across
The star-lit spaces of the bending sky,
Or ever Aton flung this little globe
Behind His shoulder and invited us
To lose ourselves on it that we might find
Still greater love through limiting of life.
There is no God but Aton—He who dwells
Here in His splendour; finds Himself in us;
Speaks with our speech: the while from sun to sun
He streams in glory, as yon river pours
In never-failing flood down to the sea.
I found thee and will keep thee, O my Queen!
Somewhere before the scattering of stars,
Deep in the silence of a dreamful peace
Above the roar of new-created worlds.
This star, O Heart! is but a halting place—
A trysting of two souls that keep the faith—
A field on which our spirit-hands let fall
Seed for the growing of eternal flowers.
How often have I lost thee, O my Love!
I, Akhenaton, have been sunk in sleep
Lulled by a host of crooning centuries.
I knew the forest and I found the hills
Ages ere Thebes was pillared near the Nile
And there was trafficking upon the stream
Past Memphis. All the lesser forms of earth:
Shrub, beast and bird, barbarian and slave,
Has Akhenaton known; rising through them
In aspiration of thy woman's soul;
Drawn upward through the night to meet the morn

Still must I lose thee, wail and want thee, Love!
Go through the deserts; make all mountains mine;
Gain strength through struggle and be purified.
It is ordained that sometimes we shall meet
And pass, not knowing that we met; ordained
That I shall speak the word to thee in vain,
For thou shalt be a maid of many dreams
From which my voice would only frighten thee:
But, Nefertiti, all the paths we tread
In loneliness and pain converge at last—
Oh, with what love and laughter we shall meet!

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

Voices of prophets pleading for the light,
Songs of glad minstrels making joyous sound,
Blood of brave martyrs crying from the ground,
Woe of all women weeping through the night,
Bear witness to the truth: There is a might
Greater than bannered armies; a profound
Vaster than thought or earth's diurnal round,—
One holy, one unalterable *Right!*

For this a princess dared a king's decree,
Found shelter for a babe lost in the reeds,
And gave a palace for a peasant's hut
To him who on the granite tables cut
Laws that outlast the pyramids—who heeds
Time in the face of such eternity?

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

Reeds only and a fleet of lotus-leaves
Sailing through them, as though to take walled Thebes!
Oh, how I hate yon hot, white splendour—Thebes!
Here by the stream, let me forget those eyes—
Eyes of the women who have been defiled.
O Fairy Fleet! take me a prisoner;
Bear me away among the bending reeds,
Past all the temples and the palaces;
Make me forget the whiplash and the cry
Of slaves; make me forget the haunting faces.
There is forgetting here—and joy—and peace.

Naked and unafraid, O Mother Nile!
I come to feel thine arms about my body.
Kiss me! Let me lie dreaming on thy breast,
Watching the flight of birds above the palms—
Green and like plumes along the yellow sand.
There is a line of crimson, where the rocks
Are crossed and re-crossed with adventuring vines
That grow red berries,—there a glimpse of blue
Against the purple of the mountain peak.
I hear the dip of buckets and the sound
Of wheels that lift to pour among the fields
Streams of life-giving waters. How the land
Laughs at thy coming, O dear Mother Nile!
Olives and grapes; wheat and the clustered corn;
Great Iris-blooms and figs and honey-dates;
The sloping fields of grass that feed the flocks

Far up the hills whence sound of shepherd-pipes
Blends with the murmur of a water-fall;
Tall soldier-palms that stand in ordered file,
Plumed and expectant of their coming queen;
These are the offerings laid at thy feet
In welcome from the land. I also bring
Oblations: full-orbed breasts, round limbs, dark eyes
And lips red-ripe for love. Lo, I am ready
For passion of all mothers, from the maid
Behind the mill to her upon a throne.
I would bring a woman's gift, dear Mother Nile:
A man-child limbed and shouldered like a god,
And with prophetic splendour in his eyes;
One who will speak the word against all thrones;
Who will not be afraid of what is written
On altar-stones or sacrificial jars;
A trumpeter to action and a voice
Stirring the people from their ancient sleep.
To bring thee such a gift, I would endure
The insolence of men who make for women
Seraglios; tempt them with carnelian floors
And ivory couches; blind them with the glare
Of graven cups of gold on silken cloths
Spread over cedar tables. With what lies
Have men deceived us. Yet would I bow down,
O Mother Nile, before some lord to bear
My man-child who shall be the thunderer
Against all wrong. . . .

What is that cry?—O Reeds!
O Wind! O Nile! It is a baby's cry!
He weeps among the rushes. Mother Nile,
Give me this babe and I will teach him words
Swifter than arrows, sharper than a spear.
The lore of all the ages on his lips
Shall be most musical. He will convince
Men by the passion of his voice, the light
Within his eyes. . . .

Where art thou, little babe?
He sleeps, dreaming his careless mother comes.
How I will mother him and shape his hands
To heal the sick; to lift the heavy load
From weary shoulders; open wide the gates
Of guarded cities. There shall be no more
Woe and wide lamentation in the world.
His feet shall be announcement of the spring,
And with his laughter many fountains vie.
Because of him all temples and all thrones
Must tremble till their towers tumble down;
And where they fall children shall come to play,
Making their flower-garlands where the blood
Of sacrifice was vainly poured or kings
Took tribute. . . .

Babe, O little babe! my babe!
Where art thou hiding? Reeds, O faithful reeds,
Tell me your secret! Hath he eyes of Egypt?
Or do they catch the colour of the sky?

I know his mouth is one pomegranate bud;
His hands are half-closed lotus-cups at dawn;
His knees are bent for kisses and his feet
Are like the leaves of lilies. . . .
Babe! my babe!
Where art thou hiding? Make a little sound,
O son of mine, a whisper as of wings
About thy head where Hathor holds her hand,
Talking to Isis who is also near.
The deities of death and life are met
And there is noise of an eternal Word!
It is a call of music out of mist,
When evening wakens silence with the stir
Of water that is muted by the trees.
It is the noise of morning on the mountains
And thunder of far cities in the noon.
It is the wail of women after war,
Weeping for those who will not come again.
It is the song of reapers in the corn;
The croon of maidens bringing home the jars
With water from the well; laughter of men
Over their cups of wine beside the door
At tales of bearded herdsmen from the north
Or quips of camel-drivers from the south.
It is the reedy music of a shout
Of gladness greeting children after school.
It is the clamour of loud temple-shawms
And beating of the bells; wisdom of words
Spoken by prophets coming out of roads
From lonely places where the gods are heard

By those whom vision makes unsatisfied
With shadows. It is all earth's many sounds
Blended within one Word—eternal Word!
O wonder of that Word my babe shall speak,
Be thou the cry that tells me where he hides
Among the reeds! Yea, as I hunt for him,
So will all ages come with praying hands
And lips that supplicate; for he will teach
Between the pillars of the past and present,
Royal and crowned with truth: yea all the world
Will laugh because of him. . . .

Again that cry!
Hush, O my baby! I am coming. . . . Ah—!

MOSES

MOSES

When God beheld how Moses turned to see,
A voice called from the bush. So runs the tale.
A truth is here—a truth that will prevail
Now as of old: Who would a prophet be,
Must find light in the little wayside tree;
Joy in the desert; he must never fail
Earth with her store of stinging hail,
Dew on the grass, night and her galaxy.

Lift up your eyes unto the hills of morn!
Truth is not truth that does not glorify
The desolate and barren bush of thorn;
Fills not with stars the tempest-clouded sky;
Brings not the murmur of a choiic strain
Of triumph from the threnody of pain.

MOSES

O wild red bird of sunset on the hills!
O winged and awful splendour of the day!
Fold thou thy feathers of pure flame and see
What beauty makes this mountain-shrub divine.
How I have watched thy flight above the sand,
Making it molten in a flood of gold
Until the camel-trains out of the east
Floated like barges and the pyramids
Were hills of fire! What wonder hast thou wrought
Upon the pillars of old palaces
And temple-doors and pavements and great walls!
The vineyards that within thy glory stand,
Expectant of the little globes of grapes;
The foam along the runnel, when the wine
Pours from the press into the fragrant jar
Waiting to join its fellows where the cool,
Dark cellar keeps them; grist of yellow corn
Ground in the little mills before the doors,
And scarlet lengths of linen on the grass
Where women weave, sing to the shuttle's tune
Or chatter while they thread the measured warp:
These are among thy many miracles,
O wild red bird of sunset on the hills!
But never hast thou worked such miracle
Of beauty as in yonder bush of thorn.

O little bush, how common and how grey
Until this moment of the setting sun!
I have passed thee a thousand, thousand times,

Leading the flocks of Jethro home to fold
Yet never knew thee beautiful as now.
Yea, thou art beautiful and all divine—
Jehovah is thy spirit, thou His flesh!
Thy thorns are like the flame-points of a star,
Each branch the clustered beams of Mazzaroth.
The place whereon I stand is holy ground—
The Lord is here and I behold His face!
Jehovah! Thou art He for whom I sought
Through Egypt and her gathering of gods
In gloomy temples.—Speak, Jehovah, speak!
Yea, let Thy voice come quivering to me
Along these branches lit with sunset-flame.
Thou art that discontent which led me on
Past muttered words of priests and bloody shrines
To freedom of the desert and this hour.
Thou dost not dwell in pyramids; Thy voice
Is not within a book; Thou dost not spend
Thy music only on an ancient psalm.

How I have waited on Thee, O my God!
I could not rest with ivory and gold;
A palace like to Pharaoh's near the Nile;
Slaves and the moving of great peacock-fans
For noontide slumber: runners in the streets
Who cried before my car: *Prince Mesu comes!*
Against the glitter of a scarab ring;
The scarlet as of poppies in my robe;
The sistrum and the viol at the feast;
I held the sleepless nights and tardy dawns

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CANADA

That witnessed to my waiting for a sign
Of freedom from the yoke and goad of Egypt,
Galling my people.
Yea, thou art the sign,—
O wild red bird of sunset on the hills!
My sandals are unloosed. Unshod I kneel.
O bush that burns and yet is not consumed,
Be thou my symbol of the universe!
God is the light that gives to common things
Divinity, sharing its radiance
With all creation. God is unconfined.
The shrub, the mountain and the moving star
Possess Him. He is in the breath of buds
Bursting to bloom; the fruit on laden boughs
Of autumn when the wind comes down the fields
To dance among the furrows and to spill
Odours of russet apples on the air.
God is the thrill of youth's first kiss of love;
The ecstasy of mothers with their babes,
The feel of them when lips are on the breast
And there is thrusting of wee hands and feet.
God is the laughter of all smitten harps.
He is the madness of loud battle-gongs.
He is the call of trumpets, roar of drums,
Crash of the lines of level spears that meet,
Hiss of the arrows that come down like rain.
God is the joy of craftsmen in their craft:
The sculptor's tender touching of the stone
That takes the form and substance of his dream;
Persistence of the chisel and the plane,

Faculty of Theology

Fidelity of broadaxe to the line;
The music of the trowel and the twang
Of cords plucked for the marking of a beam.
God is the wisdom and the calm of eyes
Rapt with the mystery of occult words
Graved in the rock or written on the roll
By prophets who have dared the gates of death
To find what angels whisper from the stars
Of man and his high destiny beyond
The golden glimmer of their farthest zone.

. . . . . .

I will go back to Egypt. I will stand
Before the priests of Amon and proclaim
One whom they do not know, who bow to bulls
And crocodiles. I will declare that God
Dwells not in gloomy temples made with hands,
That God is templed by eternity.
I will go to my kinsmen, call them forth,
Bid them be brave against their bonds and dare
The fear that fetters them, teach them to laugh
At shadowing of thrones, make them as gods
For freedom and for truth. The quest of truth
Shall go from star to star. Earth shall be led
Up paths of light in the processional
Of misted wings of flame and burning brows
And robes of beryl. From the topmost dome
Of heaven to sheol's utter dark abyss
There shall be loud hosanna from the suns
To Man the Victor who will scale the sky,
Daring the infinite of space for God!

NAAMAN

NAAMAN

Domes of Damascus, daring minarets,
Above what olden memories you rise!
There is a brooding Presence in your skies—
A winged god or an angel—who forgets
Not anything of yesterday but lets
Time pierce him with a scythe; through great wide eyes
Of sorrow he beholds the past that vies
With this brief moment, while the Pharpar frets
Lost stones of beauty.

O Damascus! Domes
And minarets are not your ancient pride:
Yours the achievement of one mighty man
Who found his soul and saved it. Not the homes
Of kings could tempt him from the path he tried—
Steepest of paths since quest of truth began.

I will not in the hateful House of Rimmon
Bow any more the head or bend the knee.
Here are but idols. Tombs are these tapered shrines—
Tombs of dead lies that long deceived the people.
I will go forth to God beneath the sky,
Meet Him upon the mountains where the dawn
Wears saffron for an ephod—is the priest
Whose turban still the morning star adorns.

. . . . . .

Have done with drone of penitential psalms,
With altars wet and slippery from blood!
Have done with fearful and uplifted eyes,
With hands of supplication clasped in prayer!
Snuff out these wicks that intercede for souls
Released by death and singing in the sun!
Does God care for the blood of bulls and goats,
Who feeds the cattle on a thousand hills?
Come! get the benediction of the day
Whose hands are dropping honey with the dew,
And let the loud hosanna of the wind
Make me forget the hateful House of Rimmon.
I have been too long beggared by half truths.
Cramped in brocaded garb of compromise,
I, Naaman, Commander of the host,
Benhadad's friend, Damascus' greatest son,
Am but a beggar!—Nay, hear all my word:
Count not my ropes of pearl, my jacinth jars,
My topaz, diamonds and chrysoprase;

My many-pillared palace on the hill,
The women of the harem and the slaves;
My drove of dromedaries from the south
And white Arabian stallions in their stalls,—
Count not these riches, for I thirst and starve
Within this plenitude of much possession.

Since I talked with Elisha, cleansed and free,
How I have hated Rimmon and his house!
The Prophet had no gold. He would not take
Gifts from my hand. He stood beneath the noon
Bareheaded and unbowed—a man among
The sons of men—the kind that I would be—
Unvexed by fear of any god. His eyes
Looked bravely on the world. Heard you his voice,
Forthwith a distant stream fell from the crags;
A wind went murmuring among the vines;
An intermittent moaning of the sea
Blent with the sound of trumpets blown for battle.
I knew him for a comrade and a brother;
My first and dreamed-of own familiar friend;
A breaster of the hills, lord of the staff
And of the long-leagued sandals and a good,
A hearty wayfarer fond of all roads—
A gatherer of grapes in many vineyards.
He had no fear of talking with his god
Who is now my god! —aye, and face to face
With Him he held high and direct communion.
I heard from him no psalm of penitence,
No sobbing to the beating of the breast;

God was to him the common and the tried,
The always-here, the never-absent One.
Partaker of the little things of life:
God the great Casual and Commonplace!

The challenge of those far prophetic eyes
Now follows me and I can bear no more
Their mild rebuke—I hate the House of Rimmon!
Benhadad's hand will vainly seek the hand
Of Naaman. The host will call and call
Among the tents of Pharpar for their lord.
There will be sound of voices in the streets,
Crying: *Where is our Captain Naaman?*
The people of the market will forget
The feel of scarlet leather to the touch
Of fingers that are trained to tell the eye
The value of a saddle. By the door
Where potters whirl the wheel and mould the clay,
Leading the bowl and oval pitcher up,
There will be talk of Naaman and how
He left Damascus. Clink of coin and stir
Of buyers in the great bazaar will cease
While men stand wondering at word of him
Who could forsake their bales of merchandise:
Silk and fair linen and fine tapestries,
Coffers of amber holding frankincense,
Urns of red agate and tall festal cups
Lipped by a lace of pearls upon the gold.
They will not know. They will not understand.
Slaves of the god that glitters, they will go

Back to the tables where the baubles are.
The wheels will turn, the huckster cry his wares,
The fool go back to folly and the knave
Complete his crime. Ere morning part in twain
The starred and purple curtain of the night
To let the laughing day leap from the sun,
I shall be gone. Never more swift the feet
Of lover to the tryst than mine shall be
Against the nearing length of Lebanon.
Across the crescent splendour of the stream
Called Jordan, past the hedges and the walls
Of little gardens, I will go and find
My prophet of the wistful open eyes;
My dreamer of the dear and tender mouth;
My laughing comrade of unventured hills:
That I may learn from him the road that leads
Out of this night of Rimmon into day
Of fearless, glad companioning with God.

THE PROPHET OF CHEBAR

THE PROPHET OF CHEBAR

Above the stream of scarlet Babylon
All harps were hung while captive Judah wept—
Remembering lost Zion. Prophets slept;
The Oracle was mute; then there came one
Who found in alien streams, when day is done
Or dawning in the desert, notes that swept
His heart with gladness: he was true and kept
Faith with his joy, like flowers with the sun.

Read and mark well, O spirit! for thou too
Art of the prophets, if thou canst find peace,
Singing a new song when the harps are still.
Go, win from every stream wild notes that woo
Thy fancy; laugh, though other laughter cease;
With thy glad music all waste places fill.

THE PROPHET OF CHEBAR

Come harken, O my people, to the song
Jehovah taught me to the cadences
Of Chebar where a little lodge still stands
Above the rushes and the cushat dove
Calls in the lotus-laden night of dreams:
A lodge of wattles, roofed with russet reeds
That shelter from the thrusting scimiters
Of fierce, relentless Babylonian noons.
Here have I pondered through the silences
Life's riddle—caught the thin elusive threads
In labyrinthine windings of the words
God writes on stones, twigs, leaves, flowers and grass;
Here have I read the scriptures of the night,
Lettered with stars upon a purple scroll:
Here have I found creation held in awe
Of some great secret which it dare not tell,
And yet is ever on the brink of telling.
I yield to form and colour of the sky,
The majesty of mountains on their thrones—
The ridges through the valleys. I rejoice
Before the iridescence of a pool,
And pray within the solitude of trees.
The flowers are my most familiar friends.
The thistle and the bramble and the thorn
Offer their odours freely when I pass.
I understand the sounds of night and day:
Whisper of roads; call of far caravans;
Twitter of mother-moments on the bough;

Noise of great cities hidden by the hills.
I am made free from fettering of tears
That instant when a bird is on the wing,
Or there is joyous piping from a tree.
Earth, sea and sky, in turn for love I give,
Grant me glad moments of their fellowship;
Tell what is happening above the stars;
Betray the planned surprises of the trees
Long ere the leafing time and let me find
How, underneath the moon, whatever draws
Soul from the soil—the flower and the fern—
Dances and makes low music with the wind.
So, harken to your brother of the lodge
Down by the river, playing on a harp
And singing of the secret of the sun,
The moon, the stars, the mountains and the sea;
Yea, harken, O my people, to the song
God taught me to the music of the stream!

. . . . . .

The song of the river!
The song of the river that floweth
By Babylon out of the desert and into the desert:
O man that mourneth under the roof of thy lodge
Hard by the river called Chebar,
Why wilt thou weep with desolate tears
And crying of one who can not be comforted?
Thou who hast loved me from babyhood here on my banks,
Played in the sun and laughed when he smithied
My waters to brass when the wind floated a leaf
Of the palm on my flood; thou who hast watched

Through the morning thy mother bent over the blue,
The scarlet and yellow woof of her weaving,
Chanting the bow-twanging words of the Psalmist:
Why wilt thou weep with desolate tears
And crying of one who can not be comforted?
Thou who hast wrought with thy father
Yokes for the cattle or fashioned sharp sickles,
Shaped a share for a plough and hewed out the beam;
Thou who hast walked down the furrows of spring,
Holding the melon-shaped jar of the seed
Hard to thy hip, the seed of the barley and corn;
Thou who hast taken a lamb from the lion and bear,
Braving the terror of night for the fold,
Leading the sheep down the slope of the pastures
Till the time for the homing of them was at hand
In the last red glare of the sun, and the moon
Came out of the olives and stood upon Carmel
Far away in the land of thy fathers:
Why wilt thou weep with desolate tears
And crying of one who can not be comforted?
Thou who hast dreamed and communed with thyself,
Lone in the starlight and rapt with the music
Made as I poured over the pebbles and into the rushes,
Thinking the thoughts of great harpers and prophets
Who have heard God speak in the thunder of judgment
Or plead in a tone more tender than that of a woman;
Thou who hast mused on the words of the mighty—
Psalms that are keyed to the quivering soul
And writ with the blood of a heart that was broken—
Psalms that are blent with the magic of moon-mist

And sun-glow and sky-blue and little cloud-fringes,
Tinctured with scarlet on mouth of a maiden
Pale from the pain of the joy of her first kiss,
Where the dusk green of the arbours of ivy
Brings out the gold on the gourds in the garden—
Why wilt thou weep with desolate tears
And crying of one who can not be comforted?
Know that the day is at hand when the terror
Shall fall from the face of the mourner;
When crying shall cease and the loud lamentation;
When nation shall not make war against nation:
When love, like the light of the sun in his strength,
Shall shine on the earth and fill the waste places—
Shall bring in the joy of the Lord and His Sabbath!

SOCRATES

SOCRATES

WHAT blasphemy to call earth *Lucifer,*
The fallen Star!—Brightest and best among
Those myriad celestial spheres wide-flung
In space, earth is acclaimed; Algol to her
Bows down; the strains of Vega's harping stir
Dawn from the arms of Night with anthems sung
To praise this planet, in that mystic tongue
Spoken by gods, graved on the gates of Ur.

Fairer than beauty of the Pleiades,
Earth passes on her way triumphant—known
Among the constellations as the throne
Of greatness proved by every test of pain;
Therefore the words of Vega's far refrain:
All hail, O Star that gave us Socrates!

SOCRATES

Appolodorus—! Son, thy tears and cries
Confine my thoughts. What I would say is this—
Crito, canst thou not soothe Appolodorus?
There, there, dear lad! I did not mean rebuke;
Thy love falls on my heart, as falls that ray
Of sunset out of blue Athenian skies
Through yonder window. How the wild motes dance,
And to what music, down the path of Phœbus!
Sweet are the sounds we can not hear, and fair
The forms we can not see; for ear and eye
Are lately fashioned instruments of Mind
Which has not mastered them and made them serve
The higher senses: we are only come
Out of the wilderness. Let my sunbeam
That spans the gulf twixt all our yesterdays
And immortality's to-morrow be
To Socrates a final theme for thought.

Plato, what thinkest thou?—The All is Light:
Not Fire, as Heraclitus taught; not Air,
Not Moisture. Light is the Forth-going One,
The Self-communicator and the Source
Of everything that is. How all the priests
Who rail against the evil times forget
That man's divinest mood appears when men
Are most forgetful and are sunk in sloth,
Or dally with their dreams!—A message here
For all these troubled times: this wide unrest
And bickering of civic polities,

With marching of great armies up and down
The desolated highways of the world.
O Athens of the gods, hail and farewell!
The centuries will rise and call thee Queen;
Men of Olympian brows proclaim thee first
To find the universal harmony:
They will forget this bowl of hemlock-brew,
Bitter as tears of poor Appolodorus,
Remembering thy beauty.
How the dust
Goes dancing down the slanted plane of light,
Like dryads hunting for Persephone
Light is the All: again the figure, friends.
Was Phidias defeated by the stone?
We would not know the man, had marble failed
To quicken his great craft of sculpturing.
Did Homer sing the song of Ilion:
Achilles' courage and the bullock-strength
Of Ajax or the cunning Ithacan,
In muted melody for being blind?
The marble was the friend of Phidias,
Resisting him that out of struggle birth
Of an eternal beauty bless the world;
Immortal music hath crowned Ilion;
Achilles' glory is the wounded heel;
Ajax is now the brute become divine;
Ulysses lives forever through the loss
And doom that drove him up and down the sea:
Light is the All, Evil is but the dark
Through which the rays perpetual appear.

I, Socrates, who am about to die—
About to die? what folly is in words!
There is no death, save that which seems to be—
The opposite of life, life that is all,
Since life and light are one: life is made known
By death, as sound leaps from the tightened string;
Death is to life as marble to the sculptor,
Waits for the touch that lets a soul go free;
Death is that moment ere the swimmer feels
The swift pain of the plunge into the pool,
Followed by laughter where the bubbles flow
From the divided water and the sun
Turns them to crystal: life and light are one.

What do I mean?—Do words conceal the soul
Of Socrates? Oh, ye are dumb with tears!
Harken, and I will tell what I declared
Before the Judges.—Take my speech, thou scribe,
Plato the lord and minister of words,
That for all time it may be known of men
How Socrates was brought to birth of Light.
It happened on this wise: 'Twixt youth and age,
I heard the calling of an idle morn
And forthwith took the old Piræan road,
For joy of gossiping among the boats
Along the shore. Priapus danced with Pan.
Dear Aphrodite shook the clustered foam
From her dark hair and silvered all the sand
With bubbles. Pallas came upon a cloud
With Lord Apollo playing. Naiads cried

For Hylas who returned from wandering,
And whispered tales of cities built of gold.
A Triton blew, melodious and long,
Poseidon's ancient challenge to the shore.
I heard the ever-whispering of palms;
A mother somewhere, soothing her hurt child;
An oath of anger from the bearded mouth
Of one half drunken sailor out of Tyre,
In quarrel with a comrade near the prow
Of their beached trireme.—Oh, the sights and sounds,
The quickening of days beside the sea!
Then in a moment I stood forth within
A wide ellipse of broad leaf-margined flame,
In colour like a bank of violets.
All that was, is or shall be drew in one
Supreme cognition. I was mixed with all.
I understood the stars; I raced with them
Across the sky beyond the fiery foam
Of that eternal sea which casts up worlds
With the forever-motion of its waves.
Out of old discords grew the harmonies
Of atom, stone and clod and earth and star.
I saw the ancient strife of hate with love
Cease at the laughter of the larger gods
Grown from the human, and at length aware
Of earth's immortal values won through tears.
I knew that sin was but the purple hem
Upon the seamless robe of holiness;
That slave and king were merely earthly masks
Concealing brothers; that a harlot's eyes

Were windows of a soul in prison, caught
Within the snare of sense, held for a while
In bonds of shame till death breaks down the door
And sets the captive free; that in their time
All creatures gain the path and win to light,
Find what was lost, restore what was destroyed.
How good, how kind were all things! Tragedy
Walked with the laughing naked Pastorals.
Hector and Priam shouted: *All is well!*
To Agamemnon. Clytemnestra leaned
In deathless rapture on her lord and king.
Antæus rose and called to Heracles,
And they embraced, talking of their old strife;
How in the grapple of their mighty arms,
The opposition of their straining breasts,
Courage, nobility and strength were found.
Pluto came forth forever out of hell,
After Persephone who flung white flowers
Upon his path, and from the underworld
A song of gladness poured. There was no need
That Sysiphus should strive against the stone;
That Tantalus should stand above the stream,
Wailing for water, or Eurydice
Fade from her lover who had dared to look
Back on the road that led from death to life.
Sunlight was on the sea where Jason saw
Medea slay her babies, and a wave
Of jade and pearl upbore them back to him—
Faithful at last and by his queen forgiven.

Mine was a moment's vision, when all things
Were manifested; then the flame went out,
And once more I was made aware of flesh:
A thick-lipped, bulbous-eyed old satyr-face;
A long-armed, lumbering lump called Socrates;
A taster of good wine through thirsty nights
Of banqueting—nay, Plato! though thou dost
Nod that great brow in protest of my words,
I am akin to Pan—not to Apollo.
Yet I confess a dignity that draws
My dæmon to my side, the brother-god
Who calls me friend; he claimed me on the shore
When there was light, and ever since hath kept
Companionship with Socrates: a Voice
Sounds in my soul that walks at ease with God—
God who is uncreated Light and Life—
A Voice that is the spirit of all sound—
The Logos! . . . Plato, dost thou know *The Word?*
Of it I shall speak later ere I die.
This Voice is still. It doth not cry alou
And clamour like the gusty Gorgias
Or loud Thrasymachus. It is the breath
Of twilight on the fields, the murmuring
Of ripened corn, the noise of water heard
Remote and far, the footfall of a friend,
The yea of maidens wooed and won within
The star-lit rapture of a summer night.
Not always have I heard this inward voice:
Waste wildernesses, paths of wandering,
Thorns and the thickets and the rocky hills;

Wild beasts about me, gnashing with their teeth;
The slipping feet! the clutching hands! the fall!
The shame of failure—oh, I know them well!
The Voice comes not for calling, is not heard
In answer unto prayer, and is not moved
By smoke of altars.—Sudden Word of God!
He who hath never heard thy silver sound,
Must come again through mortal motherhood
Until the patient soul by many births
Hath trained the ear to listen and the heart
To understand.—*Gnothi seauton*, friends!
So shall ye hold communion with the soul—
Thy mansioned soul wherein the Voice is heard
And Logos is made manifest: this teach,
My Plato. Age shall follow age, and men
Waste on red battle fields their periods
Of growth, or squander in the market place
The golden sequences of earthly hours;
Yea, men shall die the ancient ugly death
And seek re-birth, and being born, forget
The holy purposes of mother-pangs,
Until at length shall rise a godlike race
Obedient to One who will be called
The Word Incarnate! Then shall come the Light,
And life shall be held sacred—yea, all things
That struggle upward shall be helped by man
To share the going on from star to star
In hosts of joyous souls adventuring!

The Logos, Xenophon?—the *thought* of God.
What, Crito?—yea, it is a mystery

Hid in the ages ere the world began,
And dimly understood by those who delve
Deep into Nature and discover truth
Writ on the rocks and woven with the stars.
God always thought, and, thinking, sent forth waves
Of everlasting light: He is that Sun
Whose all-including rays challenge the dark
And dare the void: each ray hath form and name,
Intelligence and power; knows love, gives love,
Finds love in fellowship with those who shine
Supernal from the depths of Him who thinks:
The Logos is a word that names these gods
Outgoing from one God, and in return
For life descend to earth and share its pain!
By them the world was made and man was formed:
Each atom means the exile of a soul
Imprisoned by its act through sacrifice
Of self, that it may lead up into light
Another *self*—all glorious and wrought
Of anguish and of pain to be a god:
Man is the great adventure, is the goal
Won by indwelling Thought that is divine!
My moment by the sea, wherein I found
The fellowship of things—the harmonies
Of atom, earth and star—was the return
Triumphant of a Logos to the Light!

Art thou in shadow still, Appolodorus?
Gnothi seauton! Know thyself—*thyself:*
One Logos lost within determined dust,

Ages before the sunrise on the hills,
That He might make thee through ascending forms—
Broken by death and mended by new birth!
Yea, death and birth are sunset and sunrise,
Dividing day and night until the year
Fulfills its seasons—many deaths and births,
Appolodorus, hast thou known; thy months
Are measured by the orbits of the stars,
Thy year out-distances the path of suns!

. . . . . .

Out of this cup I drink to all good friends:
Wayfarers of the world who bravely seek
After the truth: all minstrelsy of song,
And healers of the gentle touch, and those
Who dare untrodden roads for no reward
Save joy of finding out another path
For clodded feet that falter on old ways
Leading nowhither, and the gospellers
Who laugh tears out of tired eyes that weep
The ancient error and the fault that clings.
There! empty is the bowl and flung aside
To shatter like a shard upon the floor;
But other bowls are waiting for the wine
That shall be poured unwasted to their brims,
Red, sparkling in libation to the gods
Who now receive the soul of Socrates!

. . . . . .

Light! . . . Plato, the Voice! . . . Appolodorus—

VASHTI

VASHTI

Across the tumult of great Xerxes' feast
One word was spoken, just a woman's word!
It shattered sound. Its syllables were heard
Like loud doom-trumpets of the fated East
Drunken with wine and sodden as a beast
Fat for the altar. Eyes from drinking blurred,
Glared over goblets; from his divan stirred
One with an ephod: *Slay her!* cried that priest.

Vashti! Stand forth to work your woman's way
Upon the idle feasters of the world;
Shatter the noise of revels where men feed,
Forgetful of the God whose judgment day
Brightens the sky: a word of thunder hurled
Against those tents of shame heralds your deed.

VASHTI

Ye seven slaves of Xerxes, back to him!
Go tell your drunken master, Vashti saith:
Groom of my father Evil-Merodach,
I will not go naked and posturing
Unto the feast! how many cups of wine
Made thee so insolent?
Sisters, see how
Vashti flings crown and ring to yonder eunuchs,
Claiming equality with man! Follow,
And bid your lords go loveless through the world,
Until they cease to reckon so much gold
Against our bodies! Oh, the centuries
Of bartering what never may be bought—
Love at the price of cattle! Will ye not stand,
My friends, for freedom? One by one, the years
Come weeping and they cry: *Follow, follow*
Queen Vashti!—Will ye waste those tears?—*follow*
Vashti to death or exile! Follow me!

Men will not always rave of woman's mouth,
As though it were a scarlet poppy bud
Blown into beauty on their sudden breath;
They will not ever sing about her eyes
And talk of pansies open to the dawn,
Or hymn her breasts and say they are white lilies;
They will not rope her neck about with pearls,
Bind her with bracelets till the hands and feet
Are fettered like an Ethiopian slave,

Fool her with rings on perfumed fingers:
Together man and woman shall go up
To all that we have meant by serving gods—
Those faces in a dream which are ourselves!

Ye whisper, pale, go faltering from me?
Will no one stand with Vashti in this cause?
Then by the singing certainty of truth!
Let Vashti be the first to dare the fate
Of woman claiming comradeship with man,
And sow the seed of far-off harvesting.

Ye slaves of Xerxes, take Queen Vashti's word
Back to your master and his host of liars;
Yea, tell him to recall the time that he
Met Vashti in a grove of Babylon,
And there were doves about her and a song
Of bulbuls and a falling of far-water . . .

Oh, why did Xerxes plead, who holds so cheap
His lady that he bids her walk to-night
Naked among his guests? Why did he woo
Young Vashti's virgin mouth, why did he vow
The gilded marble domes of Babylon
And all the pleasure palaces of Dura,
Hers for a hostage of reluctant kisses?—

Go——!
My Xerxes, thou hast killed the priceless thing!
There was a time when Vashti bled to see

One little mark of pain upon thy brow.
What wakeful nights she watched, lest noise disturb
Thee—home victorious from war or tired
From every care that comes upon a king!
Thy step, thy voice, thy touch made her heart leap,
Like little conies up and down the hills;
Like leaves beneath the moonlight, when the wind
Kisses the vineyards and the trailing gourds
Are green among the furrows; like the waves
That rise and fall in passion to the shore!
O Xerxes! hadst thou harkened unto her,
How she would save thee from the lies of men!
Xerxes! together we could win the world—
The world that thou hast lost with Vashti's love.

BALTHAZAR MAGUS

BALTHAZAR MAGUS

THERE was no need for him to con the page
Of any oracle, knowing the night
And every star. Those awful spheres of light—
Vast orbs whose cycles thought alone could gauge—
Filled him with wonderment, led past his age
Balthazar. What was that celestial sight?
An angel pausing in majestic flight?
Lord Christ descending to His heritage!

Blessed is he, who, when the Master comes,
Meets his high moment of the sudden star:
While others lie locked in a dreamless sleep,
Or there is banqueting, or the loud drums
Of dawn throb up the hired hosts to war,
And men are dying and their women weep.

Virgo, thou maid of heaven! within thy hand
An ear of wheat! yea, Spica burns the best,
The brightest of thy stars. The moon is down.
I saw one horn of her gore at a cloud
Low on the desert. How the harbour lights
Glimmer and fall! they are like yellow petals
Shaken from little flowers of the field
Before that great red lotus of the north—
Pharos! held high upon its marble vase
And lifted over Alexandria,
To lead the sailors in: two triremes now
Steal past the quay with homeward-moving oars.

'Tis good to be alone among the stars
Upon this temple stair.—There goes Arcturus,
Leading his flocks; behind him he has flung
The Northern Crown with Gemma's golden glow:
He has no care for crowns, who loves the sheep!
Perchance Arcturus knows that Vega plays
Her harp for him, and with celestial song
Almost persuades her shepherd to turn back.

Ha, Draco! ever in thy swift pursuit,
And ever foiled of feeding on the flocks
Arcturus leads, what holds thee from thy prey?
Is Vega's love preventing? do her eyes
Dare that deep gulf made by those gaping jaws,
And pierce them as with arrows from a bow?

How hate and love are written with the stars
That tell of love triumphant!

Whose the hand
That turned the Dipper down and emptied it
Of all its gold now scattered on the sky?
In vain the Little Dipper intervenes—
The flood spills past its proffered brim to flow
Into the waiting coffers of the night!
Vega, didst thou do this?

There Libra stands
To weigh the gold. How many talents worth,
Dear Lady of the Scales, shall Vega have
For marriage-portion, if she wed Arcturus?
Let her now pray at Virgo's shining feet
A blessing on her nuptials! let the sheaf
That Leo's sickle reaped content the maid—
Gold is for kings—Arcturus cares for sheep!

Back to thy desert, scaly Scorpio!
Out of the path of Vega and her love!
Why lurkest thou on Love's uplifting path?
Orion, raise thy many-jewelled sword
And smite the menace, or let Hercules
Venture against the peril Vega knows.

What is that star in Coma, glorious
And beautiful? is it a comet lost
Forever on the fields of night? a world

Out of its orbit or a soul between
The knees of judgment, face to face with Thoth?
It dims the other stars! Antares pales,
And Sirius becomes a smoking torch
Held downward in the token of one's death;
Perseus fades like a beacon into mist,
What time a vapour comes upon the sea
And ships toss, waiting for its welcome light;
Andromeda dissolves, as in a dream
The phantoms of dead women leave the arms
Of weeping lovers wakened by the day;
There is no gleam from Algol; no red glare
Burns in Aldebaran: brighter still it grows!

. . . . . .

Again some god is on his way to earth!
A master is about to enter flesh
And tabernacle for a while with men!
Dim, vast, long-dead, forgotten Ages rise
Out of their sepulchres, and with them come
Old heroes who have lived and died for truth!
There is a sudden noise of falling crowns
Cast by great kings in honour of this child!
The whispering of waves on moonlit shores
Dies down to silence, and the harmonies
Of spheres that turn to music also fail;
There is a pause within the universe;
God's breath is held; the pulse of things
Stops, and all colours blend into a tone
Which is the minor key of that great chord
We call the rainbow—!

Only one bright star
Beacons from heaven—only a little voice
Sounds through the world—a cry—a baby-cry—
A baby weeping—

PILATE'S WIFE

PILATE'S WIFE

Pale Fear, the joy of Psyche, in the stone
Against the glimmer of an early morn—
Light growing out of gloom! Haggard and worn,
A woman's face with eyes of terror known
Within a dream fulfilled! A little moan,
A word breathed brokenly: *He stands forlorn,*
Crowned with the crimsoned mockery of thorn,
The babe I bore to Pilate on his throne!

Down the wide arches of the pillared years
Sounds that faint cry where women wail,
Their beauty misted over with the tears
That fall forever; high above the spears,
The glittering of helmets and the mail,
One on His cross cries: *Peace! love will prevail.*

PILATE'S WIFE

Was it a dream that held me shuddering
A moment past?—O good and golden dawn!
Now is the face of Fear no longer turned
Over a bare white shoulder, with the glaze
Of horror in her eyes; methinks she smiles
To hear the flutter of the temple-doves,
Rising to flight beyond the sound of horns
Blown by the Levites to announce the day.

Was it a dream! Have I not seen His face
Among the gathered men from Galilee,
Come up with garlands on their heads to keep
Passover? Yesterday I leaned and looked
From the great tower that overtops the wall
Guarding the Gentile's Court—what made me stand
Breathless and clutching at my throat?—
He was so tall and—oh, the hair of Him!
Confusion overturned the tables, drove
The money-changers from a voice that cried:
My Father's house is called the house of prayer,
But ye have made it like a den of thieves!

Was it a dream! Lo, as I slept, He came,
Woke me from slumber with a little touch
Soft as a leaf that flutters from the bough.
First it was dark, save for a silver star
Glancing between the curtains: *'Tis the hand*
Of my lost babe whom pale Persephone
Leads out of Hades, knowing that I weep!

Forthwith I was aware of violets,
And—oh, I saw again the dreamy eyes
Of that wee one I held upon my breast,
Ere all the world went cold with death of him!
After the violets, I heard a voice
That softly said: *Woman, why weepest thou?*
I looked, and lo! it was the face of Him
Who walked within the temple-court and drove
The money-changers in confusion out.
I knew the wine-red glory of His hair,
Knelt and then whispered: *Lord Adonis, hail!*

Within my room was silver radiance
That touched the marbled Fear, and made her brow
Gleam like the gladness yonder Psyche shows;
The star that twinkled through the curtain-fold,
Trembled above His turban—white as snow:
Then it was given me to greet the Child
Celestial, born of spirit—not of flesh;
Child of the virgin-love; Child of the dream
Dared through the ages, since the primal form
Leaped from the dust!

Thou art my little babe?
The little one I lost? and lo! He said:
I am thy babe-to-be, who shall be born
Of every woman when the sword of pain
Hath pierced and made her wise to mother me!

The vision faded. Night returned the star
Between the curtains, and with shadow clothed

My marbled Fear, lifting the violets
Out of the room; trembling, I lay upon
The black panther that Pilate slew for me
And brought in triumph from the chase—its head
My pillow—then I slept and once more dreamed:
Again the violets! the Face! the Child!
Lo! they were scourging Him, where Pilate sat
With eyes averted—silent on his throne.
Pilate! Pilate! thou must not do this thing!
The violets are fading from His eyes,
Beneath the passion of a crown of thorns!
Pilate! thou wouldst not crucify the babe
I bore to thee—!

Oh, with what joy I wake
To find it was a dream, and that the dawn
Shames Fear to laughter! I will rise and go
Forth to the morning and with Daphne take
The road that leads unto the Mount of Olives;
Find where the little trellised arbours are,
Wet with the dew and glad because of blossoms
Now on the vine or creeping through the grass;
Sing to the twitter of the speckled bird
That feeds her young, so jealous of her joy
And wistful for my baby who is dead!

What is that noise like thunder in the street?
Let Him be crucified!

THOMAS DIDYMUS

THOMAS DIDYMUS

He found his way to truth by paths of pain,
Proving his faith beneath the circling thorns
That pierce the brow of thought; like one who mourns
A comrade dead, he called and sought in vain
Mid shadows for the light. He too had lain
Among the pots empty of oil. The horns
Of Sabbath sounded: *Rise! for day adorns*
Earth with its splendour, and the shadows wane.

Palely he answered: *Mock me not with breath—*
Thy phantom fashioned of the wistful tears—
He whom I love is dead! Forthwith there came
Out of the mist a face with eyes of flame,
And then a voice: *Thomas, what foolish fears*
Made thee forgetful? lo, there is no death!

THOMAS DIDYMUS

I tell thee, Peter, thou hast dreamed this thing—
Sorrow hath made thee mad! Still dost persist?
O foolish man! did I not see Him dead?
There is no doubt that He is dead and shut
Within the tomb of Joseph—man, I helped
To roll the stone against the door of it—
Behold the purple bruise on this right hand—
It is a testament that He is dead!

We will not laugh again, Peter! Work? Aye,
There's work enough to do: Yon boat of thine
Upon the pebbled beach; the drying net
Frosted with scales from yester-even's catch;
Tiberias itself, an amethyst
That waits a keel to carve a cryptic word
Of sorrow on its face; these answer: *Work!*

Fishers of men? faugh! here's a better thing
For thee and me—*Men?* better far the brute!

Come with me, Peter, to the ancient task—
Concern about the boat and fishing gear
Will make thee quite forget the grief that mars
Thy solid mind: did He not call thee *Rock?*
Come, friend, and put thy shoulder to the prow
Of that old craft of thine, sliding the keel
Along the sand until it finds the wave—
There's joy upon the wave, man, joy! joy! joy!

There's healing for the heart within the wind,
Lifting the spell that made Tiberias
A purple stone set in a ring of gold.
He loved Tiberias; the curving shore;
The hills above it, and the white walled towns—
Capernaum and Magdala. Recall
How oft He sat among the high beached boats,
Talking to children! How He laughed with them,
And told what happens underneath the lake,
Or in the sky, or through the vines and trees,
Or on the mountains! While we mended nets,
Lest one dear word of Him be missed.
There was a crippled Ethiopian lad—
Not more than five hands high from head to heel—
With eyes like onyx stones, lips coral red,
Limbs polished ebony—a sackcloth rag
Girding his loins—sat always at His feet,
And fingered the fine tallith Mary made—
Spoke not but harkened; still I see His hand
Touch tenderly the crisp curls, pause and smooth
The velvet blackness of that little face!
Strange how the lonely loved Him and the sad
Crept to His side; how every outcast knew
His coming! Once when there were wind and rain,
And thou wast out alone upon the deep—
O brave above thy brethren! He came through
The thunder to the shore and watched for thee.
Simon! He called. Thy name upon His mouth
Was like the dove of Noah in the dark—
Winged whiteness through the storm—and lo! a shaft

Of lightning clove the murk, discovered thee
Undaunted, beating home; I saw Him smile
With joy of thy strong manhood; heard Him say:
Simon, thou art a rock! He loved thy strength,
Thy hardness, man; therefore thou must be strong
Against this madness that doth quite consume
The sons of Zebedee and all the rest.
The dead are dead! they can not rise! The flesh
That knows corruption will not clothe the bones—
Ashes to ashes, Peter, dust to dust!

O voice of Jesu! miracle of sound;
Of eyes of Christ! ineffable and blue.

Come! come! to work, I say; for memory
Is madness, Peter: we must both forget—
Death lies for us in this remembering—
The shore is haunted by His joyous feet—
His footprints sing within the golden sand—
There is a whisper on the wave of Him!
The lilies of the field make me recall
Something He said about King Solomon;
The wayside grass is like the lengthened roll
On which the Psalms are written, and they tell
Of quiet walks with Him at eventide
Among the corn; but yester-noon I saw
A sparrow fly before a screaming hawk,
And I remembered what He said about
His Father's care!

Yea, I will go with thee—
Thy house was ever His. Perchance thy wife
And little child may drive the spell from thee.

Farewell, thou shore, ye idle fishing boats!
Farewell, dear lake of dream, thy days are past;
Thou wilt not any more hear Peter laugh
Or Andrew sing: we will come back to toil
But there will be no laughter, neither song
Nor prayer; our Master whom we loved is dead!

Peter, this path is worn by many feet;
How often from our boyhood have we walked
Hither with John out of Capernaum!
Thou wast the strong one; he the lad of dreams;
I ever curious, and questioning
What ye together held, who lived each day
Within a world of mountains, fields and sky;
Of green and scarlet boats and their brown sails;
Of sandy shores and bearded fishermen.
My world was one of unreality,
Whose trees were ghosts from graves of men who died
Before the flood; and such my world is now.

This did the Master: made me love the world;
Took me, a prisoner of thought, gave eyes
That I might see the miracle of life;
Gave feet that I might go upon all roads,
Undaunted by the fears of crippled men
Who falter where the strong are striding by;

Gave tongue to taste a cup of friendly wine
With yellow dates and figs, white wheaten bread,
The hot flesh of a kid baked on the coals.
Through Him I learned to see the stars and know
The names of flowers and the kinds of birds.
One day He led me to a linnet's nest
All warm and downy from her mother wings,
And there were fledglings: *These*, the Master said,
Are miracles! He made me like a child,
Taught me their games, until sad Didymus
Played with them on the shore. From Him I learned
A song with bells of camels in refrain
And singing of the sands beneath the wind.
Thomas, He often said to me, *if thou*
Wouldst give a gospel to the world, then know
All things are good; if thou wouldst save a soul,
Thine own must be a candle in the dark—
Shining that men may see and follow it.
Miss nothing—all thou seest is of God!
The Pharisees make much of fast and tears;
Taste thou and feel the preciousness of life:
For when the world is not aware of joy,
God is denied.

Now since I helped to roll
The stone against the tomb, I am returned
To my old world of shadow—Love is dead!
I can believe no more. The eyes of heaven
Are closed in sleep. The angels fold their wings
And hide their heads, indifferent to harps.

There is no music in the sky—a cross
Hath silenced everything. The world is cold.

Well, here's the house at last—how I have talked!
I have forgotten thee in my own grief—
The grief that will make me as mad as thou
And all the rest.—Ah, no! the dead rise not.
What sayest thou?—Man, I should want to place
This hand upon the wounds, ere I believed
The word of Mary!

I will not go in—
Let me rest here beside the open door.
Thy wife is waiting, Peter, and the child;
The evening meal is on the table—spread
As when He supped with us in yonder room—
Go thou within—

The stranger! who is he?
Peter, who is the stranger in thy house?
The child is on His knee!—Peter, a scar
Is on the hand that plays among the curls,
And little marks of pain are on His brow!
Peter! He looks at me—
My Lord and God!

MARY

MARY

FAIREST of women must have been that maid
To whom the great archangel Gabriel
Announced Messiah. Were there asphodel,
Rue, violet and rose within the glade
Of Mary's vision? *Do not be afraid,*
The Presence whispered, *King Emmanuel*
Cometh to earth! His voice was like a bell
Softened by distance, ere its clangour fade.

Tender is Gabriel—the lord of birth;
He comes to mothers with white folded wings,
And eyes like pansies misted by the dew:
The little cradle-song a woman sings,
Crooning above her babe, that angel knew
When all the morning stars hosannaed earth!

MARY

Sometimes I wonder if I mothered Him—
The past is clouded by the many years,
And I am very old. Was it a dream—
Those angel-faces bending from the blue,
With far hosannas flung upon the night?

Bend close to me, my John, for death is near,
And I would tell thee what is in my heart—
A tale of earth and star and seraphim.

The roar of Ephesus is like the wind
Among the olive-groves of Nazareth!
I like not Ephesus. I faint to see
The little white-walled town where Jesu played!
I like not Ephesus; Diana's face
Haunts me!

Throw wide the lattice; let the air
Breathe on my face; how peaceful is the sky!
I am not lonely when I see the stars.
On such a night we fled from Herod, crossed
The Jordan; when the great round moon peeped out
Between the cedars, I heard Jesu laugh
And call to it.

Beloved! I grow weak—
Breathing is pain—enfold me with thine arms
And lift me up—I want to keep the stars

From dancing down the pavement of the night!
Now while I live a little longer, take
My tender, broken memories of Him:
He was like other children; wee white hands
Would close and open on my mother-breasts
In joy of life, and there were baby-words
Which only women know who bring to birth.
He was a child of laughter, loved the light,
Would crawl to clutch a sunbeam on the floor.
Once when a bird lit on the window-ledge,
And He sat gazing with wide-open eyes,
A smile upon His lips, He made the noise
A fledgling makes—forthwith, the feathered one
Flew down to Him and perched on His right hand!
When He first walked and found the garden-path
To Joseph's shop, there was a sound of laughter—
Deep laughter of a man blent with the sound
Sweeter than reedy pipes, the way He laughed!
His arms grew strong from labouring to shape
Plough handles and the heavy oxen yoke;
His breast broadened; for mighty were the blows
Of His axe on the timber. He liked food;
Slept well; rose early, singing as He dressed,
Stole out to meet the dawn with water-jars
And filled them for His mother at the well.
The children used to laugh and clap their hands
When He went by them coming home from school.
Old men and women loved to touch His hair
And whisper blessing on His sun-gold head.
His eyes were like two pansies in the wheat;

His mouth was music and His hands were love!
But there were those strange moments when His face
Shone like the star that rose above His birth;
Then He would go from me and stay apart.
The hill beyond the town had charms for Him;
This He would climb and dream a morning through,
Or stay until the vesper-planet came.
Once I did chide Him, and I said: *O Son!*
Thy father had to work alone this day;
Thy mother brought the water from the well;
Thy playmates waited for thee in the field;
It is not good to stray so far alone!
And He made answer: *O my mother dear,*
God called me from the hill and I obeyed!
Lo! there was that upon His face I saw
When I rebuked Him in the temple-court;
When I spoke to Him of the wedding wine;
When I sought after Him with my son James;
When He fell fainting underneath His cross!

This is the agony all mothers know,
When God begins to claim what they have borne;
When life calls and the strong man rises up
To leave his mother weeping at the door;
Yea, ever since Eve bare to Adam Cain,
This pain hath pierced all women like a sword—
Will pierce till every woman's work is done—
Hath pierced through my soul, as the angel said!
Therefore doth Mary with her dying breath
Plead in the name of Jesu for all mothers:

O sanctify the fountains and build walls
To guard from taint those everlasting springs!
'Tis woman's secret—mothering of babes—
Pain is her sceptre, love her robe and crown;
She is the warder of the waiting stars—
Those winged sons of the morning—those great lords
Who sang across the chaos and the void
When the foundations of the earth were laid—
Those incarnating Christs who seek through her
Their Bethlehems and wind-swept Calvaries!

Teach every woman how Maid Mary's Son
Is God's oath that no mother bears in vain;
That every pang of child-birth is the price
Paid for the coming of a starry Christ;
That all the angels fold their wings and kneel
When God is born again! There is no joy,
There are no cadences of smitten harps,
Kept back from any little babe at birth:
The planets on their golden axles turn;
The suns vibrate their glory through the night;
The constellations call across their courts,
Flinging from all the high eternal towers—
Glory to God! Peace and good will to men!
For God is in the things which He hath made.
The clustered gourds that grow along the wall;
The dew upon the damson and the fig;
The brown of lengthened furrows lately ploughed;
Stir of the sap, unfolding of green leaves,
Upthrust of grass and corn, return of birds—

Nest-building underneath protecting boughs
With little songs of mating and of love;
Teach: every mother is a miracle!

What was He, ere His body grew in me?
What is He, now that He is gone from me?
The Master! Aye, John, thou hast found the word—
He proved that on the cross of Golgotha!
And of all mothers Mary is most blessed,
Who held Him first and suffered ere He found
Gethsemane! I knew the nail and thorn
Before they fastened Him upon a tree—
His *eloi lama sabbacthani*
Fell from my lips in birth-pangs of His life!

John! it grows dark—a chill is on my face!
See! there—a little baby on the floor:
His hair is like the tassels of the corn;
His eyes are pansies growing in the wheat!
Nay, not a baby now: my starry boy,
Broad-breasted, like a lion in His strength!
Nay, not a boy: Christ of Capernaum,
The friend of sinners, healer of all hurts—
White is the turban that adorns His brow!
Now it is Christ of Golgotha, blood-stained
And crowned with thorns on His uplifted cross!
He is among the golden candlesticks;
His eyes are brighter than the noon-day sun;
His voice is like the waves upon the shore;

His feet are like two tongues of cloven fire
Mirrored forever in a sea of glass,
And there are multitudes of lifted hands
Holding white flowers to adore His name—
Jesu—!

PAUL TO TIMOTHY

PAUL TO TIMOTHY

WITHIN the tower of eternal Time
Great names are hung, and each is like a bell
Heard through the distant harmonies that swell
To clear, melodious intervals of chime:
Immortal names of those who stood sublime
Where others faltered, turned aside, or fell;
Who took no pledges from the hand of Hell,
Brave on the path which only heroes climb.

And of these tones that from Time's tower fall,
Pealing the ages by, one through the chord
Carries the music of a great refrain—
Hark! how its melody on earth is poured
In silver tumult, as of summer rain—
O dominant, persistent name of Paul!

The long day ends at last, O Timothy,
And I, Paul, prisoner of Jesus Christ,
Wait for the dark. Upon my window-ledge
A sparrow twitters, pecks at the iron bars
As though to set me free this night of Rome.
A lad is singing somewhere in the street;
His voice, careless and free, recalls Cilicia—
Tarsus, my city, where the Cydnus flows—
Recalls those first, far days when in my heart
No pain had found a place, and I was Saul
The Benjamite, named for the son of Kish.

How swiftly Age turns back the gate of Time,
And with what eager pace pursues the path
Trod by the feet of Childhood! I can see
The scarlet-prowed Phenician ships, triremes
Down from the Tiber, and Egyptian barges;
Abundant fruitage of the date and palm,
Tall, Bacchic amphora, the perfumed bales
Of Tyrian purple, piled along the quay:
Again I hear the sailors and their songs,
The strange, brown mariners of many seas,
With arms like anchor-cables in their strength.
Oh, then was I a wanderer of earth,
And dreamed of brave adventure in far lands!

They say the Hebrew burning in my blood
Closed all life's doors, save one, upon the world;

That I, the Pharisee of Pharisees,
Contemned the beauty and the song of Greece!
How little do they know, my Timothy
My dear disciple and my bosom friend—
Heart, soul, feet, hands, eyes, ears and lips of Paul—
How little do they know!

To-morrow morn,
Without the city wall, I shall kneel down
Before the Roman sword and die!—O Death,
Where is thy sting? O Grave . . .

The lad still sings—
Would thou couldst hear his song! Anacreon?
Nay—Sappho! He? Athenian, I think.
'Tis such a voice as that Eunice heard,
Son of the Faith once and for all delivered,
Telling of Timothy returning home,
Or ever thou didst follow Christ and Paul.
Why doth he sing and hale me back to life—
Who on the morn must die? And Sappho's song!
Flee from this world ordained to death!
The wrath of God is kindled in the sky,
And Babylon shall be consumed in smoke!

How all the gold is gone from out the west—
'Tis crimson now, and on the Forum falls
A menace as of blood!—O Babylon!
The cup of thine iniquity is full,
And runneth over even to the ground.
Still doth he sing; and always Sappho's song!

O Greece! the tongue of Homer and of Paul
Is in that song; behold, the sound thereof
Goes forth unto the ends of all the world!

How little do they know, son Timothy,
Of Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ!
A Pharisee? yea, straitest of that sect;
Learned in the Law? aye, from Gamaliel;
A persecutor of the Church of God?
Saul who consented unto Stephen's death—
Ah, woe is me! Yet little do they know,
Who know not this: The law of sin and death
Is done away in Christ by whom all things
Are sanctified; and neither Jew nor Greek,
And neither bond nor free, exist in Him
Who is the first begotten Son of God,
The keystone of life's slow ascending arch,
And who completeth all things in Himself.
Nathless, I found this truth not easily:
In those far boyhood days beside the Cydnus,
Watching the sailors and the ships, I felt
Shame of my passion for the many tones
And tinctures of the coloured sails and prows;
Shame at the tumult in my heart at songs
Sung by the boatmen; for the Law is hard,
And presseth with a heavy hand upon
Youth and the innocent delights of youth.

Young Rabbi Saul the Thunderer, and Saul
Consenting unto Stephen's death, are dead—

Slain by the piercing of the cross of Christ;
Christ of the lilies—He who loved the fields,
And heard the children in the market place
Complaining at the unresponsive feet,
And ears deaf to their piping and their song.
Doth He know my lad singing in the street?
My young Athenian, whose voice for Paul
Cries *Ave atque Vale* on the world!

Christ is not quickly learned, and gradual
Is the progression of a soul to Him.
Hard strove I through the barriers of thought,
And one by one dissolved the old ideas
That misted over mountains of desire;
Before I found that all things beautiful,
Like lilies of the open field, are spread
Beneath the benediction of His love.

Write this again: *There is no bond nor free!*
This is the Faith; and this is Jesus Christ,
The Saviour of the world! Think what it means,
O Timothy—this Faith thou hast received
To give and guard at Ephesus. Let fall
Distinctions from henceforth, and keep in one
The diverse aspirations of mankind.
Thou wilt remember what I lately wrote—
The feet of him who bears that letter speed,
As sped Pheidippides: *All utterance*
That is inspired comes only out of God;
For nothing that is beautiful and true

Lives but by breathing of the Holy Ghost!
And they, who like this foredoomed Babylon
Build citadels cemented by men's blood,
Are numbered with the damned! Do I not know?
Am I not Paul, the prisoner of Christ?
Creators of sweet sound and lovely form
Care not for Babylon: they seek the hills,
And find God in the thunder of the sea;
They know Him where the cedar and the pine
Are vocal with the passion of all souls
That are with dross of earth unsatisfied;
This have I learned from the Athenian
Who sings the joy of Sappho unto Paul.

Gone are the gold and scarlet from the west;
Night falls, and Rome is like the Galaxy—
Indefinite with stars! A myriad
Of tiny flames are flaring on the hills,
And in those evening fires the souls of men
Are manifested—souls that upward burn
In emulation of the beautiful;
For the invisible, pure things of Him,
From the creation of the world, are seen
And understood by what is made. One God,
One Law, one Hope, one Faith and one desire,
Are in the impulse of creative hands,
And on the lips that sing—as sings the lad
To Paul the prisoner, great Sappho's song!

PORPHYRY TO MARCELLA

PORPHYRY TO MARCELLA

Should we not render tribute to the kings
Who doffed their diadems to one of thorns?
Forgetful of the murk of those dull morns,
Men miss the whiteness of triumphant wings;
The song that fell from brave prophetic strings
Of lifted harps; announcement of the horns
Blown by glad heralds: yea, Tradition scorns
Those minstrels, cries: *Their deeds were evil things!*

O unclaimed brethren of our risen Lord!
We call you saints among the holiest
Who unto death, eternal Christ confest;
Because your praise was also to Him poured,
His be your guerdon and your great reward:
These are among my brightest and my best!

PORPHYRY TO MARCELLA

I lay at Lilybæum almost dead,
When my dear master, Plotinus, found me;
Hunger and tears had well nigh set the soul
Free from the flesh that keeps it prisoner.
Longinus was the first to show the way—
Malchus, my name, he changed to Porphyry,
Because I wore the purple robe of Tyre,
The city of my birth—he had no one
More hungry for his measured words than I;
He was so learned that all the books of Greece
And Alexandria were in his mind!
At length I came to Rome, a youth of thirty.
Uplifted in my pride, I sought to prove
Amelius and his great master wrong;
Failed in my argument; found that defeat
Was triumph, for it led to Plotinus!
Six years I studied, then in wild despair
Fled unto Lilybæum—fled in tears,
Crying: *Soul, thou art fettered by the flesh:*
Come, Death, and set me free to find the light!
For days I did not know the taste of food;
Thin as a palimpsest, my body grew
Diaphanous—the older word revealed
Under the recent scripture of new birth;
I hated life, and lay me down to die!
There was no pleasure in the cleansing bath
That makes the body almost worth its soul.
I turned from music that can pierce the flesh,

And touch the soul; avoided every face,
Vowing no friend should tempt me back to life.
Then came the Master with the spoken word
That only the Initiate may hear,
And called me back to life and its strait path
All souls must tread up far ascending planes
Of matter till the mystic moment comes.

Marcella, ere I close these written words
Meant for thy consolation and thy peace,
A something further I would add—a thought
Fashioned through contact with the creed of Christ,
Which Origen taught me at Cæsarea:
Philosophy is threatened by the Christ;
Our days are torn by this tremendous strife
'Twixt past and present, and all ancient thought
Is strangled by the pressure of His word,
Who gives a life that may be seen of men—
Handled and understood. Philosophy
Is not a thing for hardened hands to grasp,
Nor for dim, labour-wearied eyes to see.
The slave who bends above the heavy oar,
Grotesque and like a demon in the dark
Of his foul galley-prison, can not see
The sunlight on the wave, the distant shore
With palms like palaces beneath the blue;
He can not feel the freshness of the wind
Blowing the breath of vineyards from the hills:
A sip of water from the broken gourd—
Guarded from yonder thirsty Nubian—

A moment's hasty munching of dried dates;
A little sigh for freedom he has lost,
And, later, sleep upon the plunging deck;
These are the measure of his dreary life.
He has no leisure for the figured stars,
No time to ponder on the Pleiades,
Or mark the distance of Alcyone;
There is no wonder anywhere for him,
No joy in crocuses and asphodels,
No madness in the music of the rain,
No fine, sweet aspiration bred of nights
Under the opal crescent of the moon:
Wouldst thou gain from him lasting gratitude,
Then talk not thou to him of *eidola*,
But give him food and rest, and promise him
The liberty and love that he has lost!
So I have named and crowned Christ conqueror,
Who is the king of slaves and all who bow
Beneath some yoke! He gives to fettered life
What thoughtful Plato can not hope to give:
A sip of water with a leaf of dates;
A little balm for limbs bruised by the chain;
A dream of final freedom from the oar.

Yet there is much that I would criticise—
Not Christ, but those who name Him through the world!
I know the writings well, have studied them
At Cæsarea under Origen—
The greatest teacher of the Nazarene—
Find Christianity is not the Christ.

As Plato's thought was clouded by the words
Of those who claimed to be interpreters,
So Christ is hindered by the jealousies,
Factions and sects that wrangle in His name.
I am not hostile to the Carpenter,
Who is a marble pillar on the sands
All desolate and bare save of its beauty!
No written word can ever tell of Him,
Yea, though a god came down from heaven to earth,
And wrote it in a book of beaten gold,
Graving each letter with a fiery star—
The mystic and forbidden hieroglyph
That opens to the Adept all the doors
Of Wisdom; it would fail to figure Him!
No eye of earth could gaze upon His face,
For when He passed this way Christ wore a veil;
He suffered men to touch a seamless robe,
Or rattle dice for it beneath the cross,
Forgetful of the god above the crowd!

Philosophy is not a truth for slaves;
It is for growing gods like Plotinus.
These teachers of the Christ would prostitute
Philosophy to that ignoble bed
Where Superstition dreams, and from this fate
Must I set Wisdom free; else from the sin
A child be born to wet the world with blood,
And blurr the page of history with tears!

Came He too soon, Marcella? was Christ cursed,
Like His own fig-tree, putting forth His leaves
Before their season? would a later age
Have understood Him better? So it was,
And shall be: One who thinks among the stars,
While others grope for pebbles at His feet!

DANTE

DANTE

Behold the man who hath been down in hell!
Ravenna whispered when Dante walked by.
In hell? yea, for his great soul dared to try
All paths of that adventure which befell
Him on the way to heaven. No one can tell
What God doth with a prophet ere his cry
Waken a world from sleep with words that fly,
Like arrows, swift and irresistible.

Out of the depths of dim Gethsemanes,
After the dregs of Grief's most bitter cup;
Spent with the passion of a bloody sweat;
How earth's immortal, mighty minstrels seize
Their harps celestial, and with song play up
The host from Golgotha to Olivet!

DANTE

Guido, I have held the torch of truth
To this bewildered age of many lies;
And ere Ravenna take my weary bones,
Dante hath somewhat for thy patient ear.
The books are in thy hands; do thou with them
As it seems best to thee: men will not know
The secret doctrine till the world hath won
The bliss of Beatrice; found the morn
Above the misted peaks of Purgatory;
Left Hell behind and its tormenting hate!
Thou wilt not see that day; the world will cry
Through centuries for Dante's hidden word.

What is my meaning? this: Each soul must go
Down every gulf of Hell, until it find
That frozen centre in the love of self;
For Purgatory's bleak ascent begins
Only when each wan pilgrim finds how cold
Is love self-centred, seeking for its own.
The ancient strife of Ghibelline and Guelf
That rends the states asunder, pouring blood
On Italy, as though the grapes that grew
From Arno and the Tiber to the Po
Were crushed and emptied in a flood of wine,
Is proof of what I say: Men will not hear
The word of Dante, they must wait until
The King of Love is placed on Peter's throne,
And Florence, Rome and Rimmini are one!

The books thou hast are but a parable,
An image of Æonian Romance;
The tale of every man is written there:
Lose not thyself in symbols; lift thy thought
Up to the height of spirit; strive to win
The vision that no earthly eye hath seen.
The pilgrim journeying upon life's way,
And finding torment, is the human soul—
I figure him as Dante in the books;
Virgil is Mind, and Beatrice Christ.
Think on the soul, divine its mystery:
By Christ all things are made; He is the urge
Of matter, is the principle that seeks
Ascent through atoms till it find the star!
The soul is Christ; the blossom from the vine;
A sword within the sheath; a diamond
Set in a ring; wine in a stoppered jar.

Truth must be hidden in old metaphors,
Lest watchful Mother Church smell heresy,
And interdict my books! Strange how the priest
Fails as a prophet; is grown blind to stars
That beacon wise men, while the written word
Blurrs from the droppings of his altar lights!
This talk now of a local hell and heaven;
The cleansing pains of penance and the like;
The praying of a soul out of one place
Into another—but there! the walls have ears,
And sometimes whispered words may carry far—
I think, Guido, thou dost understand—

Let us return: Hell is the way of Christ,
The school wherein each soul must learn to read
The alphabet of which Christ also saith:
I am the first and the last! a stage of growth;
A mile upon the march among the stars!
Thou art a cunning player on the lute,
Hast sung my Terza Rima to the strings,
While all Ravenna listened; dost thou tune
An instrument according to the tone?
And if, because of tension and of strain,
The strings snap, dost thou lay the lute aside?
Not so, my friend; for there are other strings
To make the triple melodies again.
The soul is an immortal instrument
Played by the Master—Christ on many chords;
He strings it with the functions of the flesh,
And keys them up according to His will,
Making the perfect harmonies through pain!
What if the body fail and discord come?
Well, there are other bodies for the soul
Which must endure the trial, till the notes
Are equal and the Player satisfied.
Yea, every human soul hath its own Christ—
The Beatrice of celestial dream.
The Christ of Jesu proved His instrument,
Whose cross is pledge that every cross doth rise
For each soul's triumph, till eternal song
Blend with the music of the Morning Stars.

Take now my figure of the Mantuan—
Virgil who guides the pilgrim on his way;
Reason is that persistence of the soul,
Which leads it down the awful zones of fear,
Proving all things. The soul is born of Christ,
But Reason leads that Child forth on the Path
Till he return instructed. Note the place
Of Purgatory—opposite to Hell;
Its seven rings are cycles of re-birth
Through which the soul ascends to Paradise.
Each fall must have a corresponding rise;
We must go up through that which was descent,
Must win to victory where we have failed.

Thou wilt remember all the pits of Hell;
The fearful sweep down deeper gulfs of pain;
The trees that bled; the hate that gnawed the skull
Of its old enemy; the gates of Dis:
These are but pageantries of thine own soul,
The downward progress of thyself past sin!
The sin thou hatest, thou hast somewhere sinned;
Somewhere of old thou didst pass through that sphere,
And learned its terror: thou hast gained one step
Up the ascent that ends with Beatrice!

Now as each soul draws nigh its waiting Christ,
It takes on character of that same Lord,
And reaches down another soul to save;
This taught the Master: *When thou hast been changed,*
Make strong thy brother! Lift the feeble hands;

Bind up the wounds; sing to the desolate;
Go forth and cry aloud in all the streets:
Come, for the feast is ready—ye are called!
Summon the poor, the halt, the dumb, the blind,
Begging along the highway of the world;
Speak to the painted harlot and the thief:
Put on your wedding garment—Christ is come!
Rebuke the trumpets and the drums of strife,
Cry to the captains and the lords of war:
Know ye the marriage of the Lamb is nigh,
And ye are called unto the wedding-feast?
Say to the Pope enthroned on Peter's chair:
Descend and walk beneath thy cross through Rome,
And on the Hill of Love be crucified!

. . . . . .

Mix me a cup of water and of wine—
I grow too weak to talk. . . . There! let me sleep—
I may dream of the lovely towered town
That will not give me place to rest my head.
I ache for Florence and her terraced hills;
The gleam of Arno underneath the bridge;
The song of troubadours at carnival;
The pavements and the pillars and the domes!
Snuff out the candle. Friend of mine, good night!

JOAN OF ARC

Dreams of Domremy: There's a little hill
Of apricots and grape-vines, looking down
Upon the towers of an ancient town,
Red roofs, gardens and cobbled streets, where still
Maid Joan communes with Michael; 'tis her will
France shall be free: kissed by the sun, her brown,
Bare arms are lifted to a lily-crown
From which wild odours of the blossoms spill.

Hark! from the distance throated thunders roll;
The sky is shaken by a bursting shell;
Pillars of smoke, like hostile giants, stand
Over the meadows of that sunny land:
Back from my people! O ye hounds of hell—
Strike for thy freedom, France, and for thy soul!

The wind of dear Domremy kissed my face;
Immortal gladness grew within the wood;
Wonder went with me down amid the corn,
Beneath the far infinitude of sky!
Now when the good God saw I loved His world,
He was so pleased He called one of the saints
And said to him: *Dost thou behold yon maid*
Kneeling before my flowers? since she cares
For these my little ones, I give to her
The saving of fair France! Go unto Joan;
Be voices, sudden visions, frequent gleams
Of glory slanting through the swaying trees;
Hurt her with beauty, vex her soul with joy
Of finding what the waters say at night,
When all the stars go wading in the brook,
Swim with the lilies on the dappled pool
Or sail the moonlit margin of the sea!

First I was made aware of one new note
Thrilling the rapture of the nightingale,
A tone within the colour of all buds
Bursting to May, an under-harmony
Sung by the wind among the apple-trees;
Then there was nearness of the leaning clouds,
As though the sky had opened like a field
Of sheep that claimed me for the shepherding;
Last came the voices and great Michael's face—
I may not speak of Michael!

Now that the shame is lifted from the land,
And down in old Domremy mothers sing
While children dance about the magic tree,
Death does not seem unfriendly. There's a place
Within the wood, smooth and all green with grass;
Thither we used to go at Holy Day,
And on a mossy stump our Pierre would sit
Piping for us a joyous little tune,
While we together wove a moment's dream
Of laughter with our bodies—keeping time
Upon the grassy floor with what he played.
Ah, Pierre! the angels took you long ago,
And often through the voices I have heard
A faint sound as of piping! There's a hill
Of apricots and vines that called me first,
When I was but a little, dreaming child;
Here Michael met me in a burst of light
That smote the vale with splendour like a sword:
There was no voice then, only sudden light—
A light that dimmed the noon-day sun and turned
The blue sky pallid.—Light! thou gavest Joan
A wisdom greater than the lore of priests;
Then was my spirit quickened, and I knew
All mysteries of life: I whom a book
Baffled, read what was written on the grass;
Listened to life, and caught the whispered words
Shaken from rain-drops by the laughing leaves;
Ran down the hollow of the hills and heard
Voices beneath the clover, under stones,

And saw a multitude of spirit-hands
That beckoned from the branches of the trees.

How they who sought to prove me one bewitched,
Have pondered: *Whence hath this poor peasant maid*
Such wisdom!—God of Michael from the mist;
God of my angel with the ready sword
Swift from its scabbard, an uplifted flame
Against oppression; by the mouths of babes
And sucklings Thou hast ever ordained strength!
Upon the prayers of mothers and of maids,
The War Lords of the world shall not prevail;
For God is with the gentle things of earth,
With those who wear the armour of His love,
And gird their loins for service in His name!

Whence came the voices? Friend, do you not know
That earth is but a vestibule of veils
Before the House not made with human hands!
About us there are spirit-presences
Who know that we have need; they reach to us
With longing, but the veils prevent their touch;
They call to us, and we go wondering:
Whence came my sudden joy that conquers grief?
O sleepy sense of touch that can not feel!
O mortal deafness that will never hear!
O eyes of earth that, seeing, do not see!
God gave us flowers and the patient trees;
Mirrored the moon against a crystal sky;
Fashioned the stars from sun-gold in the west,

Hung them beneath the roof of all the world,
Till morning melts them back again to mist:
God gave us these, and with them children's eyes,
And ears, and hearts, that we might wake to touch,
Sight, sound of angels! Foolish mitred men,
What do ye, with your learning, understand?
I have talked with the angels, and I know!

Now that fair France lifts up her lilied head
To greet Time with her laughter, and unveils
To kiss the mouth of Fortune, Death will come
Softly at day-break, calling unto Joan.
I shall not fear the faggots and the stake;
The folded arms upon the breast, the stare
Of eyes that lust to look at innocence
Robed with red draperies of clinging flame;
For Michael will be waiting for my soul!
Together we shall dare the paths of space;
Find Pierre piping on his appointed star
Among the flowers that he loved so well,
Glad of my coming, swift to sing me home:
And from the music that we make on high,
There shall be in the heart of France—a song!

GIORDANO BRUNO

GIORDANO BRUNO

The Monk of Nola is indeed no more;
His cell is empty, and the threefold cord
Hangs with its cowl beside Saint Peter's sword!
Vainly the Vatican leans on the lore
Of Councils; what was everywhere of yore
Held by the faithful, and with one accord,
Yields to the moment of his mighty word,
Who looked not always after but before.

Rise from your ashes where yon statue stands
In Campo di fiora! Bruno, speak
That word of thunder to the world abroad:
Man is the Sacrament made by Christ's hands;
He is, of life's ascending slope, the peak—
The crown—the consummation of his God!

Even thou, Giovanni, my familiar friend
In whom I trusted? What! thou art afraid
To look at me? Do Bruno's eyes hurt thee?
Nay, do not hide behind the chasubles
Of Holy Inquisition; speak thy mind,
And tell the Fathers that which they would know:
How certain books I wrote traduce the creeds
Of Mother Church!

What pleasant nights we spent
Within thy palace; what discourse we had
While others slept, and I led thee beyond
The crystal spheres of old to boundless space!
What moved thee, O Venetian, to betray
Thy friend? . . . Nay, mutter not, nor cross thyself!
Giordano hath not made a covenant
With devils! . . . Yea, my Father, read the charge.

So that is what my accusation saith?
The Monk of Nola is indeed no more!
He was a curious boy who loved to look,
Without distraction of crude, painted things
Hung on the wall, tarnished by candle-smoke,
Out of the window where he knelt to pray;
For he had learned that God is not confined
In paint and mortar, that He is revealed,
As the Apostle saith, through what He made.
He found no virtue in a Saint's thighbone;

No miracle in the Madonna's face
Above her altar, when the sanctus bell
Rings and a wafer is become the Christ!
Yea, rather was he caught within the loops
Of light thrown by the stars among the vines,
Or fastened by the many-coloured cords
Of sunrise. Noonday magic on the grapes;
The crickets chirping where the wheat is ripe;
The call of birds; the river's ancient song;
Trees and the carnival of summer-flowers;
Claimed Bruno when he tried to be a monk.

Then came Copernicus! At first I laughed,
Railing with many words: *What! Earth so fixed—*
The central point of heaven, round which the sun
Wheels and stars turn—a floating sphere in space?
Then reason woke within me and I found
Copernicus was right, and went one step
Past my new master—taught that nothing bounds
The universe but law.

Nature is one.
One purpose weaves the weft within the warp
Of matter, though the stuff be molten suns,
Or atoms in the amethyst that gleams
Upon the finger of His Grace—my judge!

When I was but a boy at Nola, fond
Of roving, on a summer day I climbed

The hill Cicada; from its height I saw
Vesuvius was like a cone of grey,
In contrast with the vineyards at my feet:
Later I stood above Pompeii, found
My hill was changed to barren, rocky slopes;
Round me were many blossoms and the vines!
I learned by this illusion of the eyes,
To challenge sense with reason—prove no fact
By feeling—Fathers, is that heresy?
He is an infidel who dares to bound
God's might! Take now a creed of Mother Church—
The Mother whom I love—hold ye one thought
That cramps Creation and Omnipotence?
Then ye are heretic. Find God in Nature,
As ye discover artists by their work.

Ponder the lilies of the field, said Christ.
O Priests of Venice! ye who try me here
Against my death at Rome for heresy,
What do ye know of lilies? can ye tell
The monk of Nola how the lilies grow?
I knew them ere I learned to sing High Mass,
Or hear confession and expound the Book!
If only ye seek God beyond the stars,
How can ye hope to find Him Who is near?
If ye disdain the portico of heaven,
How can ye love the House not made with hands,
Eternal in the heavens? Oh, how ye rob
Life of its joy! How narrow is the world
Wherein ye move! Your sky is but a dome

Of hammered brass alight with holy wicks
Placed in the great concave; your moon a lamp
Borne in procession round the altar—earth!
God's truth! ye think as though the universe
Were Peter's Church at Rome, and all the flowers
Are waxen—though the world is white with bloom!
I break the dome, and exorcise the fear
That haunts the faith of men; I say to them:
God stands closer to us than we to self.
He is the Soul of our soul, He unites
All Nature. Grain of incense, drop of oil,
Hath Him as much as any Holy Mass!
Lift up a broken oleander stalk,
A wheaten straw, a pebble round and smooth
And ye have lifted high the very Host!
Man is the Mass; therein God's love transforms
The elements—making of them His flesh!
God is existence; everything is God.
Pain, suffering, and sin—aye, death itself—
Are shadows creeping down Vesuvius,
When the sun rises; shadows disappear
At noontide glory, life is at the morn;
Therefore these glooms against the mounting sun
Fade fast, as men are more aware of God:
When life has reached its zenith, there will be
No shadow anywhere of pain and sin,
For all will share its glad meridian!

Now, Fathers, will ye send me bound to Rome—
A prisoner, like Paul, of Jesus Christ,

And doomed to die for witness of my word?
Wherein is Bruno heretic? What truth
Have ye which I hold not, and even more?
Yea, all that is contained within the Creeds
And Councils of the Holy Catholic Church,
Giordano holds. But faith transcends both creed
And council, is the evidence of things
Not seen. Is faith the journey or the road?
Faith is the pilgrim with a scrip and staff,
Taking all roads at pleasure. Is the Church
Weak as to fabric, that the stake must stand
Forever as the symbol of her strength?
Dogma that must be buttressed by the ban
Of excommunication is not truth!
Who hates in the defence of what he holds,
Or drops one bitter word against the name
Of his antagonist can not be true:
The calm of Christ before Caïaphas;
Paul's manner with the Areopagus;
All martyred love: bear witness to my word.

And so ye have condemned me! Venice gives
My body unto Rome—this night, perchance,
Or on the morrow, I must take the road
Of martyrdom to Rome—how many more
Must travel that same road, because their faith
Is overmuch! But old skins ever fail
New wine, and from the Branch—Copernicus—
Thought-clusters hang, which from the press of Time

Will pour fermenting liquor to destroy
Your moulded bottles. Bind me to the stake;
Scatter my ashes on the Tiber's tide;
The world will kneel in tears for what ye did!

DARWIN

DARWIN

Eternal night and solitude of space;
Breath as of vapour crimsoning to flame;
Far constellations moving in the same
Invariable order and the pace
That times the sun, or earth's elliptic race
Among the planets: Life—dumb, blind and lame—
Creeping from form to form, until her shame
Blends with the beauty of a human face!

Death can not claim what Life so hardly won
Out of her ancient warfare with the Void—
O Man! whose day is only now begun,
Go forth with her and do what she hath done;
Till thy last enemy—Death—be destroyed,
And earth outshine the splendour of the sun.

DARWIN

Alfred, I am a withered leaf—a twig
Dry of the sap; yet how I love the picture!
Is heaven less blue because the stellar dust
Veils night eternal from all human eyes?
Life is, though forms pass: well, I will regard
One moment filled with wonder of the world,
Forever worth the passing, when this jar
Crumbles! . . . Why do you nod in protest, friend?
I am serene and patient, grateful, glad—
Asking no more of life than what it gives:
Eyes quick to see the march out of the mist,
And into mist once more; ears that are tuned
To music of the many strings of joy
And sorrow; tongue so wistful of the word
Telling the truth; obedient hands and feet;
And over all, the mind with wings that soar!
I trust, ask nothing, watch meanwhile, and wait;
Whatever is for me to win, no one
Can take: if there be not some afterword,
Some music and a flower from the feast,
A going up the hall with Him, my Host,
In conversation as of comrades—well,
Enough that I was called to sup with Him,
Drank from His cup and pledged the world with wine!

My fundamentals are misunderstood—
Is the fault mine? 'Tis not a ready pen
That wrote *The Origin*. The many reeds

Of melody were never mine; I saw
More than I had the skill to tell, confused
The music. This my meaning: Chaos bears
To that eternal Energy called God,
A child whose name is Form, swaddled with clouds,
"And with no language but a cry!"—the noise
Of thunder, telling of vast, molten seas
Which clamour, till the child becomes a star—
This planet—swinging through the zodiac
Among his brethren who come, crying: *Hail,*
Child of our mother Chaos! From the sea
Huge shapes appear, plunging to rocky shores
Forbidding them the land, till tail and fin
By aspiration change to foot and wing.
Hoarse trumpetings of anger or of pain;
Red ooze of blood on bracken; now tell the tale:
Struggle of Form with Form—experiment
Of Nature working blindly but in faith
To one end: *Mind!* Love dominates the chords;
There is a song upon the star-lit hills:
GLORY TO GOD! ON EARTH, PEACE AND GOOD WILL!

Brave are your words of war; and yet I think
Survival of the worst, not best, is in
Those passioned hymns of praise: war's work was done,
Through struggle of the fittest brute, when Form
Was found for Mind. You say that always war
Genders the noblest? calls a god from clay?
That work was done before the glacial glare

Rivalled the redness of yon setting sun!
You are at odds with Nature, who destroy
Man's body. Is there not some higher test
Of greatness in the patience of that faith
Which dares adventure on forgotten roads,
Or hidden trails unfound by human feet,
To find God cradled where the cattle are?
Must we who sought and found, go lonely back
Without Love's offering of gold and myrrh—
Back to the place we knew before the star
Came softly from the silences of night?
How worth the painful journeying, to cry:
I have seen God upon His mother's breast!

Never have I been atheist—*the fool*
Hath said within his heart, there is no God!
God may hide in the mass; may look on life
Through eyes that slowly opened, until man
Gazed in the artist and the seer, and said:
How beautiful! how good! but I hold not
With those who cry: *Behold God in the Book!*
If there be God, He must be always One;
Must not be hid by this, revealed in that;
Must be unchanging, like unchanging law
Which keeps the constellations in their place,
Holds atom unto atom. Bud and blade,
Frond, leaf and petal are obedient
Each to its character; and, like the suns,
Depart not from the course, by law ordained,
Up the ascent of life. God is in Nature—

There only may we find Him. Did she fail
To make Him known to man, then would man be
Apart from her and alien to the earth.
God has not ceased to walk down garden paths.
He has not grown a-weary of the rose.
He is not deaf to lifted song of leaves,
What time the artist comes for tinting them
Out of his ample shards of autumn-tones.
God is the lover of all open wings,
Of all who glorify the world with song.
There are no moments of the infinite;
All things come to their growth by Nature's law—
A star, a planet, species or the soul;
Therefore, I wait, make no assertions, stand
Humble before the mystery of life and death—
The pillars of that portico whose doors
Are shut; though from the steps I may look down
To trace the winding path up which I toiled,
And view my halting places: There I slept,
Dreaming a while; there I rose with a laugh,
Made strong by what I dreamed, and took the road.
How many mile-stones we have passed, my friend,
In our long journey to the double-door!
Will that door open, Alfred? shall we see,
One day, the Good Host standing in the hall
With waiting hands and lips of love that smile?

VOICE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

VOICE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Voice of our Century, whose heart is broken,
Weeping for those who will not come again—
Lord Christ! hast thou been crucified in vain?—
Challenge the right of every Tyrant's token:
The fist of mail; the sceptre; ancient, oaken
Coffers of gold for which thy sons are slain;
The pride of place, which from the days of Cain
Hath for the empty right of Power spoken!

Be like a trumpet blown from clouds of doom
Against whatever seeks to bind on earth;
Bring from the blood of battle, from the womb
Of women weeping for their dead, the birth
Of better days with banishment of wrong,
Love in all hearts, on every lip—a song.

In much I am Agnostic, hold against
Fine definitions of the ancient creeds,
Keep back from dogma and forego the Church;
But this I have through many searchings found:
A Will at work on Man's deep truest self—
A Power that is not Nature's central Flame,
Yet works with it. This Will is in the Law
Called Evolution, and this Will is God!
It hides in Matter—is the Principle
That leads the atom out of the electron
Up through amœba till it ends in Man.
Man is a mile-stone on the slow ascent
Whose summits are encompassed by a mist.
We may look back a little down the path
By which we came, and we may look ahead
Dimly to guess what stations lie beyond;
But we must not be certain, for we walk
By Faith and not by Sight.

I plead emancipation from the Church,
The tyranny of Priests who blind the eyes
Of Wisdom, threat and ban all those who seek
Truth in the moment—not in yesterdays.
I plead deliverance from Diplomats
And lying Warders of the State, who draw
Nations to battle for the gold that buys
Grafter and Sycophant. I plead the right
Of Workmen to the wage commensurate

With the expense of living; plead the right
Of women to a place with men in all
That touches life, of children to good food,
Pure air, laughter and play; I plead the right
To think and give expression to my thought.

Man's night is now behind him and the day
Leaps up in glory burgeoning the hills.
What lies behind us is the nursery
With babies' baubles scattered on the floor—
Toy soldiers, arks and pictured fairy books—
The Man smiles kindly at them as he goes
Forth to his labour! There is much to do:
The winding trails of ancient Ignorance
Must be made straight—a highway for the King;
The hills that threatened us must be brought low;
For there are songs of gladness in the wind,
There is a chord of music from the trees—
A noise of distant thunder that proclaims
The coming of the God whose name is Man!

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